United Nations S/2014/447

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 June 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 26 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to inform you that, on 24 June 2014, the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations received a note by which the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo transmitted a letter, also dated 24 June, in which the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, through Assistant Secretary-General Dimitry Titov, who signed on his behalf, requested an exemption to the travel ban in favour of a United Nations-sanctioned individual called Gaston Rumuli Iyamuremye (alias "Victor Rumuli Byiringiro"), referred to as President ad interim of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR).

In his letter, Mr. Ladsous stated that Gaston Iyamuremye would travel on 25 June 2014 to Rome in order to attend, the following day, a one-day meeting organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Catholic organization. Mr. Ladsous went on to add that, in Rome, the FDLR leader would meet a team of special envoys and representatives led by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mary Robinson, accompanied by the Special Envoy of Belgium for the Great Lakes, Frank De Coninck, to discuss how to accelerate the "ongoing FDLR disarmament and surrender process" and to consider "the options available to achieve this objective".

Rwanda found this request highly questionable, in terms of both the procedure and the motivation. Therefore, the Government of Rwanda, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, objected to the request for a travel ban exemption. Consequently, the Chair of the Committee, through a note, reported that the exemption request had not been approved and proceeded accordingly to inform the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Nonetheless, we were informed that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) did not even wait for the decision of the Committee before starting the process of airlifting a United Nations-sanctioned individual, as well as other FDLR leaders, including individuals wanted by the Government of Rwanda for their responsibility in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. Indeed, while the request concerning the travel ban was pending, MONUSCO transported, by helicopter, Gaston Iyamuremye from Kanyabayonga to Goma, where he was transported to Kinshasa, through Kisangani, in a MONUSCO aircraft.

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On the procedure related to the request for a travel ban exemption, the Government of Rwanda wondered how the Department of Peacekeeping Operations could make such request only one day before the actual date of travel, despite the fact that the meeting in Rome had been in preparation for a long time. This compelled the Chair of the Committee to use an emergency no-objection procedure of only 24 hours, instead of the five days provided for in the guidelines of the Committee. Was the Department of Peacekeeping Operations trying to ambush Security Council members, in the hope that none of them would have enough time to consider this controversial request?

The fact that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations preferred to send this request itself, instead of going through the permanent mission to the United Nations of the State of which the listed individual is a national (Rwanda) or resident (Democratic Republic of the Congo), could even undermine the neutrality of the United Nations, as it may suggest that some senior officials of the United Nations, and of the Department in particular, are driving forward a hidden agenda of sanitizing the FDLR *génocidaires*.

As to the motivation behind the request, Rwanda was of the view that the request in itself constituted a gross violation of relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 2098 (2013) and 2147 (2014). In those resolutions, the Council stressed the importance of addressing the sustained regional threat posed by FDLR, a group subject to United Nations sanctions whose leaders and members include perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and have continued to promote and commit ethnically based and other kinds of killings, in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Security Council had therefore mandated MONUSCO, particularly through its force intervention brigade, to neutralize armed groups, including FDLR, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this respect, I also recall that resolution 2150 (2014), adopted on the occasion of the twentieth annual commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi, called upon Member States to investigate, arrest, prosecute or extradite all other fugitives accused of genocide residing in their territories, including FDLR leaders. It should be clear that FDLR has been at the centre of chronic instability in the Great Lakes region for two decades and that any further delay in eliminating this group and its ideology would only serve to cause further harm and suffering to the region.

The request for a travel ban exemption is part of a pattern, which has arisen over the past two decades, of a series of manoeuvres that attempt to deny and diminish the criminal essence of FDLR, to find excuses for its acts, to treat this *génocidaire* group as a notable group with legitimate political grievances and, ultimately, to cleanse it of the most heinous of crimes, crimes linked to its ideology, including through religious communities.

Unfortunately, for 20 years, we have observed manipulations and conspiracies around FDLR. It is a grave insult to the victims and survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, as well as to the people of Rwanda as a whole, that the very body that failed our people 20 years ago would be considering today a tacit return to such a shameful past.

It should be clear that Rwanda considers FDLR leaders and members who persist on the path to violence as the single biggest threat to national and regional

peace. We here recall our clear policy towards FDLR, which is to stop the violence, disarm it, have it set aside its genocidal ideology and repatriate its members through the established process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, which has been most successful for more than a decade, delivering more than 10,000 former combatants, including top military leaders.

While Rwanda has been engaged in and remains committed to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the recent actions by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations threaten the effective implementation of that Framework and undermine the credibility of the Security Council, when its decisions are violated by those who should be the first to implement them. It would not make sense for Rwanda to remain the only country to continue participating in the Framework when doing so only advances the interests of others, including countries of the region. Therefore, Rwanda would consider withdrawing its participation from that Framework should the Department, by supporting other regional and international actors, continue these attempts to sanitize FDLR *génocidaires*.

I should be grateful if this letter were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Eugène-Richard **Gasana**
Permanent Representative to the United Nations